

A SYSTEM OF PHONIC WRITING

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A System of Phonic Writing by Charles Morrell

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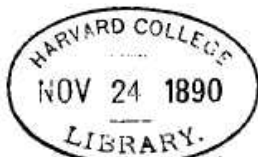
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CHARLES MORRELL

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A SYSTEM. OF PHONIC WRITING.

THE SPIRITI, OR BREATHINGS.

The sounds, whether whispered, hissed or vocal, of every language are produced by the breath passing through the sounding, vowel and articulating organisms, situated in the throat and mouth. A sound can not be made without breath. The breath is of two degrees, either light or heavy, and is called smooth or rough. These are also called spiriti, or breathings. The Romans called the one spiritus lenis, which means soft or smooth breath, and the other spiritus asper, which means rough breath. The light or smooth breath, spiritus lenis, is the breath we breathe every instant of our lives, sleeping or waking, and which is necessary for our existence. The heavy or rough breath, spiritus asper, is the smooth breath, spiritus lenis, made heavy or rough. Sounds are also of two degrees or kinds, either smooth or rough. A

smooth sound is produced by the smooth and a rough sound by the rough breath passing through the sounding organism.

The Greeks, in their latest alphabet had no letter to represent either of these breathings, but indicated them by two different marks, one of which was placed over every vowel letter that began a word. The Romans had no marks for these breathings, but represented one of them, the spiritus asper, or rough breath, by the letter h. The other, the spiritus lenis, they left out of their alphabet altogether. In the Latin language it had no mark or letter of any kind to indicate its existence, the vowel letter itself without a mark standing for the sound produced by the smooth breathing. The Moderns adopted the alphabet of the Romans, and, accordingly, we have only one breath letter, that of the spiritus asper, or rough breath, which is the letter h, and nothing to indicate the existence of the other, its corresponding smooth breath. This has been the cause of great confusion, for the letter h has thus been considered a consonant, which it is not. Neither is it a vowel or sonant; it simply stands for the rough breath. The Greeks, therefore, considered the vowel letters as representing the different sounds, and the smooth and the rough marks as representing the breath, both smooth and rough which created those sounds. The Romans considered the vowel letters as representing the different sounds, and the letter h not as creating, but as simply making the sound rough. The Greek alphabet was, perhaps, the more philo-

sophic of the two, though the Roman was the more practicable and legible.

This rough or smooth breathing is the connecting link, or power, between the consonants and sonants, for the consonants could not accompany the sonants if there was no breath. Again, no language can be properly represented that does not have a sign for each of these spiriti, or breathings. Also, both should be represented or both not. The smooth breathing is as much of an existence as the rough. To represent one and not the other is liable to lead to errors in language and in the interpretation of alphabets, or else prevent them from being understood; for we can not understand any alphabet unless we can perceive the reason of its formation.

Were the alphabet to be represented in a manner similar to that of the Greeks, which should not be done, the spiritus lenis, or smooth breathing before the first letter "a" in the word "aha" would have a sign or letter to represent it as the spiritus asper or rough breathing before the third letter "a" has a sign to represent it which is the letter "h." The Greeks held, and they were correct from their standpoint and also as far as they went, that the breathing, either smooth or rough, and not the vowel commenced the word and accordingly should be represented. That no word, strictly speaking, commenced with a vowel and could not, but that every word began with either a breathing smooth or rough or a consonant. Hence the marks for the smooth and rough

breathings over the first vowels of all words that did not commence with a consonant.

Although the smooth breathing exists it is not noticeable to the ear in vocal speech any more than is the wind which makes the voice through a trumpet. We know that the wind or breath makes the voice, but we hear the voice not the breath. The same reasoning applies to a steam whistle, but in that case, although we can not hear the steam we can see it. This wind, breath or steam that we do not hear in the voice of this class of instruments corresponds to the *spiritus lenis* or smooth breath that makes the sound through the human vocal organism and the vowel corresponds to the trumpet, whistle or other instrument.

In the system of Phonic Writing in this book the breathing and vowel are considered together and unseparated because one cannot exist in speech without the other. The sounds produced, therefore, or the smooth or light conspirates or sonants are represented by smooth or light characters and the rough or heavy conspirates or sonants by rough or heavy characters. Thus are the breathings and vowels together represented as active and creating the sounds, that is to say, sounding or sonant. There are thus five *conspiriti leni* or smooth breath conspirates or sonants and five *conspiriti asperi*, or rough breath conspirates or sonants.

The subject of the breathings, from which the above is a short extract, has, along with the science of Phonetics, been considered in detail and will be published in the second volume. The first alphabet following is the Perfect Theoretic Alphabet, the second one is the Practical Phonographic Alphabet. The uses of the Perfect Alphabet will be explained in the second volume above mentioned.